[Shri K. Mohanan]

to release a gum of Rs. 5 crores during this year and Rs. 7. 5 crores in the coming year to fulfil these programmes.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY (Tamil Nadu): I fully support the demand of Shri Mohanan.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, statement by the Minister of Communications...

श्री शरद यादव (उत्तर प्रदेश) : पोइन्ट आफ आर्डर । माननीया, मेम्बर को पहले एक बेहतर सुविधा प्राप्त थी कि मंत्री जी के ब्यान पर किसी भी सदस्य को स्पष्टीकरण मांगने का अधिकार था । मुझे जानकारी हुई है कि एक पार्टी से एक ही आदमी को प्रश्न पूछने का अधिकार अब दिया जा रहा है । मैं आपके माध्यम से सभापति जी से निवेदन करना चाहता हूं कि इसको बदला जाय और जो अधिकार पहले था उसको बहाल करें ।

उपसभापति : सब मशविरा करके तय हुआ है । अपोजीशन के लीडर्स से तय करके हुआ है ।

श्री शरद यादव : मैंने अपने अपोजीशन के लीडर से पूछा तो उन्होंने कहा कि हमें तो मालूम नहीं है ।

उपसभापति : यह व्यवस्था के मुताबिक है, इसमें चेंज करने का सवाल नहीं है ।

STATEMENT BY MINISTER—

Revision of Postal and Telecommunication Tariffs

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): Madam, the House is aware that the Posts and Telecommunications Services are one of the biggest public utility undertakings of the country. These services are utilised by all sections of the commmunity and our effort has been to maintain the services in the best of satisfaction of the people and expand them in towns and cities as well as in rural and remote areas.

The House is aware that there are large demands for expansion and up-gradation of telephone services in the country; At present, against about 32 lakh main telephone connections, there is a waiting list of over 10 lakhs. Some of the applicants have been waiting for years together. There are also demands for extending the telecommunication services in rural areas and also to improve the reliability and quality of service.

To do all this- the Department needs additional financial resources. These finances are to be generated internally and partly by public borrowings. To be able to generate internal resources and to service the borrowings, the Department must maintain an adequate rate of return.

The operation and maintenance cost of the telecommunication services has gone up very high due to increase in staff salaries and escalation in prices of maintenance stores and spares. While the index of wholesale prices (1960—61 — 100) has gone up to 700 in Nov., 1986, the average price (tariff) index for telephone services during the same period has increased to only about 360, clearly indicating that the Department has absorbed most of the inflationary impact in its input prices without passing on the burden to the subscribers.

Similarly with the successive sanctions of DA and additional DA, the manpower cost per person has also continuously risen and stands at nearly 12 times the cost per person in 1960. Recently the recommendations of 4th Pay Commission have also cost the Department about Rs. 100 Crores a year.

Apart from increase in the operation and maintenance cost of the services, the capital cost of providing a new telephone connection has also increased substantially due to escalation in prices as well as introduction of electronic and other exchanges with modern technologies in the network. The revenue per telephone connection is not commensurate with the capital invested. In fact, most of the new projects are running at a loss. Furthe^ as a measure of social responsibility and balanced development of rural and remote areas, the Department is providing telecommunication services in these areas on a high subsidy, at a loss.

The Department of Telecommunications prepared an ambitious plan to invest Rs. 11, 300 crores during the Seventh Plan against which the Planning Commission has allotted Rs. 4, 010 crores only.

In the light of the above factors, the Government has very reluctantly decided to increase some of the Telecom, and Postal tariffs. In doing so, however, we have taken care that the burden of increased tariffs does not fall too much on the lower income groups. In the light of this it has been decided: —

(1) Not to increase the local call charges from public telephone;

(2) Not to increase the call fees from the long distance public telephones in rural areas;

(3) Not to increase the tariffs for telegrams;

(4) Not to increase the rentals for telephone connections.

(5) Not to increase the charges for installation of new connection and for the shifting of a telephone in a telephone exchange system of less than 500 lines.

(6) Not to increase tariffs in respect of rural subscribers who are served by flat rate exchanges where only a flat rate of rental is charged.

At the same time we are increasing free call limit by another 75 calls in a bi-monthly period from 200 calls to 275 calls. This will provide relief to the low calling* rate subscribers whose telephone bill will, in effect, come down. The value of free calls will come to Rs. 990 per year at the new tariffs against the rent of Rs. 750 to Rs. 1200 per annum for different sizes of telephone systems.

The main increase in tariffs relates to the local and trunk call charges. The chargeable calls out of the first 2000 local calls made in a bi-monthly period will be charged at 60 paise per call instead of existing 40 paise. Calls made in excess of 2000 calls will be charged at 80 paise instead of 50 paise at present.

The increase in the local call charges will largely affect only the heavy calling rate subscribers. The trunk call charges are being increased suitably according to distance.

PBX 'and PABX are used basically by large establishments. The cost of providing and maintaining such facilities has been rising. It has, therefore, become necessary to increase the rentals for PBX and PABX.

Similarly, the cost of providing and maintaining the telex, teleprinter and telephone circuits has also been rising. The rentals for such facilities are suitably increased to cover the higher cost. These again are being used by lage establishments.

The installation and shifting charges of telephone and telex are being increased to cover the actual cost. However, suitable rebate is provided to a subscriber wherever he arranges his own equipment and internal wiring.

The proposed increase is expected to yield an additional revenue of about Rs. 375 crores in a full year. I may mention that even with these increases the index for telephone tariffs with 1960 as 100, will still be

[Shri Arjun Singh]

only 490, which is only 70 per cent ot the corresponding general wholesale price index.

It is proposed to implement the revised tariffs with effect from December 1, 1986.

The Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951 will be suitably amended to bring into force the above changes under the authority vested in the Central Government under Section 7 of the Indian Telegraphs Act, 1885. The relevant notification in the official gazette will be placed in the House in due course. I am laying a Statement on the Table of the House giving the existing and proposed new tariffs.

I will now speak to you about the Postal Services in our Country. As you are all aware Postal "Services play an important role in the life of the community. Our Postal network is the largest in the world. The Postal operations provide an essential service to the common man. We have as many as about 1. 45 lakh Post offices spread all over the country of which as many as 1. 3 lakhs are in rural areas.

The Department of Posts is incurring recurring losses in running its various services. The deficit, which stood at Rs. 136 crores in 1984-85. rose to Rs. 163 crores in 1985-86. With the further increase in the cost of operations due to the implementation of the 4th Pay Commission recommendations and all round- increases in other operational costs such as air freight, rail freight, etc., the deficit is expected to be of the order of Rs. 400 crores during 1986-87. The last revision in tariff was made in June 1982. Since the deficit will be beyond our expectations, we have no other alternative except to increase the tariff of certain items which are not largely used by the common man. We propose to increase the tariff on book packets containing printed books tnd periodical^ registration fees, commission on money orders and Indian Postal Orders. However, in order to protect the interests of rural population, who may be sending money orders for smaller amounts, we have not increased the commission for money orders upto Rs. 50. These revisions will come into effect from January 1 next year.

On account of these revisions, the Department expects to earn an additional revenue of about Rs. 79 crores in a full year.

I am placing a statement showing the details of the tariff revisions on the Table of the House. *[See* Appendix CXL, Annexure No. 97-A.]

1. 00 P. M.

SHRI KAMALENDU BHATTACHARJEE: (Assam): Most of the news circulated was false.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय : (उत्तर प्रदेश) : उपसभापति महोदया, सबसे पहले मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि जिस बात की चर्चा आज मंत्री महोदय ने अपने वक्तव्य में की है, दोनों सदनों के चलने, उस बात की जानकारी हर देसवासी को समाचार पत्रों के माध्यम से पहले ही हो चुकी है । 12 नवम्बर को, 13 नवम्बर को, 15 नवम्बर को, तथा 17 नवम्बर को, जितने भी समाचार पत्र इस देश में प्रकाशित होते हैं, सभी समाचार पत्रों में इस बात की जानकारी आ चुकी है जिसका वक्तव्य मंत्री जी ने आज दिया ।

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय : : मेरी आपत्ति यह है कि दोनों सदनों के चलते हुए भी इस बात की सूचना समाचार पत्रों को किस प्रकार हो गई कि संचार विभाग मनीआर्डर, पोस्टल आर्डर, टेलिग्राम आदि की दरों में वृद्धि करने जा रहा है ?

दूसरे यह कि आप देश की जनता के साथ धोखा कर रहे हैं । आपका जो टेलीफोन विभाग है इसके बारे में जितनी चर्चा की जाए वह कम है । एक पूर्व मंत्री जी ने, जिनकी मृत्यु हो गई है, कहा था कि अगर टेलीफोन काम न करे तो उसे सरेन्डर कर देना चाहिए । अभी पिछले सप्ताह समाचार पत्रों में आया कि प्रधान मंत्री को एक पत्र जो दिल्ली से भेजा गया विश्व भारती के वाइस चांसलर के पास पहुंचते पहुंचते उसे 20 दिन लग गए । देश के प्रधान मंत्री का पत्र विश्व भारती के वाइस चांसलर के पास समय से नहीं पहुंचता है जहां पर कि भूतपूर्व प्रधान मंत्री श्रीमती इंदिरा गांधी पढ़ती थीं तो साधारण जनता का क्या हाल होगा । इसके अलावा आपने फोर्थ पे कमीशन की रिपोर्ट का जिक्र करते हुए इस बढ़ोतरी को जस्टीफाई किया है और कहा है कि इसके कारण सौ करोड़ रुपये का भार आप पर पड़ने वाला है और आपने विवरण में कहा है कि इस बढ़ोतरी का असर देश की साधारण जनता पर नहीं पड़ेगा । जो प्रकाशित मैटर है, पुस्तकें हैं, उसमें भी आप बढ़ाने जा रहे हैं, मनीआर्डर पर बढ़ाया है और कहा है कि 50 रु० तक वृद्धि नहीं होगी । आपके आंकड़े के अनुसार एक रुपये की कीमत 14 पैसे रह गई है, तो 50 रु० का आवंकलन निकालो 14 पैसे के हिसाब से वह आदमी कितना रुपया भेज सकता है बिना मनीआर्डर कमीशन की वृद्धि के ? मैं पूछना चाहता हूं कि कैसे आप यह कह सकते हैं कि जो वृद्धि आप करने जा रहे हैं इसका भार, अतिरिक्त भार जो कमजोर वर्ग के लोग हैं, जो गरीब लोग हैं उन पर नहीं पड़ने वाला है ?

दूसरे आपने इस बात की भी चर्चा की कि टेलीफोन का प्रयोग मामूली लोग नहीं करते हैं । लेकिन आपको जानकारी होगी कि बहुत से लोग पब्लिक काल बूथ्स पर जाकर टेलीफोन करते हैं । आप इस बात का दावा करते हैं कि हमारे देश की जो संचार व्यवस्था है सबसे बड़ी संचार व्यवस्था है । यहां की 75 करोड़ की आबादी है तो आपकी संचार व्यवस्था भी बड़ी ही होगी । लेकिन क्या दुर्दशा है टेलीफोन विभाग की, डाक तार विभाग की ? लोग मनीआर्डर करते हैं तो छः छः महीने बीत जाते हैं लेकिन लोगों को मनीआर्डर नहीं मिलता है । जो आपके विभाग में गड़बड़ है, प्रणाली में गड़बड़ है उसमें सुधार लाइये । आपके विभाग में बहुत से लूपहोल्स हैं उनको समाप्त करके जो आपने आश्वासन दिया था इस देश में समाजवाद लाने का, इस देश में जो गरीब लोग हैं उनके हितों की रक्षा करने का उस आश्वासन को पूरा करिये । आपने यह भी आश्वासन दिया था कि कोई अतिरिक्त भार गरीब जनता पर नहीं लगायेंगे लेकिन इससे वह आश्वासन पूरा नहीं हो रहा है । आपने इसमें वृद्धि करके इस देश के जनता के साथ धोखा किया है । जो आश्वासन दिया था उसके उलटे काम किया जा रहा है ।

उपसभापति : आप संक्षेप में बोलिये

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय : आप इस तरह वृद्धि करके क्यों इस देश की जनता का अभिशाप प्राप्त कर रहे हैं ? मेरा अनुरोध है कि आप जो वृद्धि करने जा रहे हैं उसको वापस लीजिए । तीन महीने बाद बजट सत्र प्रारम्भ होने वाला है । उससे पहले विपक्ष के नेताओं के साथ बैठ करके उनकी राय ले करके एक अपना चार्ट तैयार करें । हो सकता है उसमें सब की सहमति हो जाए, सारा देश सहमत हो जाए । लेकिन फिलहाल इसको वापस लीजिए वरना आपको इस सदन के बाहर भी विरोध का सामना करना पड़ेगा और उस विरोध को रोक नहीं पायेंगे ।

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY (Tamil Nadu); Madam Deputy Chairman our hon. Mr. Arjun Singh has done this unpleasant job. 1 think he has taken some earnest pains in making this lengthy statement to justify the hike in

[Sim V. Gopalsamy]

tariffs. Of course, it is one of the biggest public utility undertakings, i. e Posts and Telecommunication Service*. But, Madam, through you I would like to ask the Minister whether the telephones do function. They never function. I think we are having one of the worst telecommunication systems in the world. The telephones do not work and you are saying that it is a public utility undertaking. After making this statement, could the Minister give a guarantee that the telephones will hereafter work? No. of course, he has not increased the tariff of local calls from a public telephone booth. But public telephone booths never work. You cannot justify the increase in local call charges from 40 paise to 60 paise. It is an attack on the common man. So, you cannot justify it. The calls made in excess of 2000 calls will be charged at 80 paise instead of 50 paise. I do not find any rationale in increasing the local call charges. You have also raised the installation and shifting charges. For installation of a new telephone connection in an exchange system of 500 lines and above you have increased the charges from Es. 300 to Rs. 800. Could you expect a subscriber to provide his own internal fittings in an exchange system of 500 lines? Again, you have increased the shifting charges in an exchange system of 500 lines and above from Rs. 150 to Rs. 600. The charges for installation of a new telex connection have been increased from Rs. 300 to Rs. 800. As far as postal tariffs are concerned, the increase in the registration charges from Rs. 2. 75 to Rs. 4. 50 is a real burden. When the postal services are an essential service, this would definitely affect the common man. You say that you are doing so many things in the Postal services. 1 think, by abolishing the uneconomic post offices in the rural areas you have put a very unbearable burden on the common man. Therefore, may I request the hon. Minister to reconsider this and maintain the status quo as far as the existing tariffs are concerned.

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी (मध्य प्रदेश) : महोदय केन्द्र में पुन: मंत्री बनने के बाद श्री अर्जुन सिंह जी राज्य सभा में पहली बार वक्तव्य दे रहे हैं । हम समझते थे कि वे कोई शुभ समाचार देंगे । लेकिन यहां तो "प्रथम ग्रासे मक्षिका पात:" यह कहावत चरितार्थ हो गई है । वे ऐसा वक्तव्य लेकर आये हैं जिसका न सदन में स्वागत हो सकता है और न देश में समर्थन हो सकता है ।

महोदया, पहला प्रश्न मैं यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि यह टुकड़ों-टुकड़ों में जनता के ऊपर बोझा लादने का कौन सा तरीका अपनाया गया है । कुछ दिन पहले रेल मंत्री ने माल-भाड़े की दर में वृद्धि की घोषणा की और 5 सौ करोड़ रुपये का बोझा देश के ऊपर डाल दिया । अब संचार मंत्री आये हैं । मैंने दोनों का हिसाब निकाल कर देखा है इन्होंने लोगों पर 454 करोड़ रुपये का बोझा डालने का ऐलान किया है । रेलवे का तो अलग बजट पेश किया जाता है लेकिन बाकी बातें कभी तक केन्द्रीय बजट में समावेशित होती हैं । लेकिन ऐसा लगता है कि केन्द्रीय बजट में जो बड़ा भारी प्रहार होने वाला है उसके लिए लोगों को छोटी छोटी चोटें मारकर तैयार किया जा रहा है । महोदया, यह बजट की पवित्रता का उल्लघंन है । बजट को एक मखौल बनाया जा रहा है अगर रेलवे अलग है, डाक तार विभाग अलग है और पब्लिक सेक्टर में एडमिनिस्टर्ड प्राइस के नाम पर बजट के पहले कुछ चीजों की कीमत अगर बढ़ाई जा सकती है तो बजट पेश करने का कोई अर्थ नहीं रहेगा । मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह पूछना चाहता हूं कि इस समय इसकी बढ़ाने का क्या औचित्य है ? क्या बजट के लिये नहीं रखा जा सकता था । उन्होंने स्वयं कहा है कि एक दिसम्बर से टैरिफ बढेंगे और एक जनवरी से डाक की भी जो वृद्धि है वह लागू होगी । अगर वे यह अंतर कर सकते हैं तो वे 28 फरवरी तक भी रूक सकते हैं ।

महोदया, डाक और तार विभाग यूटिलिटी सर्विस है, मुनाफा कमाने का साधन

नहीं है । अगर सरकार की नीतियों के कारण दाम बढ़ते हैं और संचार मंत्री महोदय ने माना है कि होलसेल प्राइस इंडैक्स 700 हो गया है नवम्बर 1986 में, अगर होलसेल प्राइस इंडैक्स बढ़ता है तो आप वेजेज बढ़ायेंगे, कर्मचारियों को आपको अधिक तनख्वाहें देनी पड़ेंगी और उसकी पूर्ति करने के लिये आप फिर और बोझा डालेंगे । यह विषम चक्र कहां तक चलेगा ।

मंत्री महोदय ने बड़ी कुशलता से अपने वक्तव्य को तैयार करवाया है । इसके लिये मैं उनकी तारीफ करना चाहता हूं ।

"Not to increase local call charges from public telephones."

क्या करने वाले हैं यह बाद में बताया है । पहले मैं यह नहीं करूंगा मैं वह नहीं करूंगा इसका बखान है । मगर फिर भी उन्हें मानना पड़ा कि

"We have taken care that the burden of increased tariffs does not fall on the lower income groups."

अपरोक्ष रूप में उन्होंने स्वीकार कर लिया कि जो न्यूनतम आय वाले हैं उन पर भी बोझा पड़ेगा । 50 रुपया मनी-आर्डर की सीमा निर्धारित करना हास्यास्पद है । किताबों पर, समाचारपत्रों पर अगर आप ड्यूटी बढ़ायेंग, उनसे अगर ज्यादा पैसा लेंगे तो समाचार-पत्रों की कीमतें बढ़ेंगी, टेलेक्स के दाम बढ़ेंगे । क्या इसका समाचार-पत्रों पर असर नहीं होगा? क्या आम आदमी को वह नहीं देना पड़ेगा ?

महोदय, हम एक विषम चक्र में फंस गये हैं । मैं चाहूंगा कि मंत्री महोदय इस पर थोड़ा सा प्रकाश डालें । यह ठीक है कि वे संचार मंत्री हैं और तार, टेलीफोन और डाक की चिन्ता करेंगे लेकिन रेल मंत्री के बाद संचार मंत्री का इस तरह का बड़ा भारी बोझा ले कर आना असंतोष पैदा करेगा । यह भी संयोग की बात है कि दोनों मन्त्री मध्य प्रदेश के हैं और मैं भी मध्य प्रदेश का हूं । महोदय मन्त्री महोदय से मैं कहना चाहूंगा कि क्या बोझा लादने से पहले उन्होंने अपने विभाग में मितव्ययता करने, अपव्यय को रोकने और यह पब्लिक यूटीलिटी सर्विस है इसके लिए प्लानिंग कमीशन से आपको ज्यादा रकम मिले क्या इन सारी बातों का विचार कर लिया या क्या और इनके सारे प्रयत्न विफल हो गये, आम आदमी पर बोझा डालने के अलावा कोई चारा नहीं बचा है ? पब्लिक युटीलिटी सर्विस फिर भी जो आदमी टेलीफोन करता है वह पैसा देता है, जो डाक में पत्र भेजता है टिकट लगाता है टेलीफोन अगर घर में कोई रखता है तो किराया देता है, हर कोल का पैसा देता है, यह किस सीमा तक बढ़ाया जाएगा यह मैं जानना चाहता हूं । मैं मंत्री महोदय से अपील करूंगा । आप थोड़ी कटौती करेंगे यह तो मालूम है तो कटौती का एलान अभी करेंगे या आगे जा कर करेंगे, यह बता दीजिये ।

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY (Karnataka): Madam Deputy Chairman, I am constrained to say that what the Minister, Shri Arjun Singh, has done today is most irrational, most unjustified and most misconceived. Madam, we are entering a period, a new period where the annual budgets have been dispensed with for all practical purposes, as my colleague has said. We have introduced budgets by instalments, monthly budgets, perhaps leading to weekly budgets and daily budgets in future. Never in the past escalation of prices has brought about piecemeal budgeting in the country as much as it has today. The common man should not be taken in and cannot be hoodwinked that because there is escalation of prices, there has got to be escalation of tariff also. Who is responsible for escalation of prices? It is not the common man, it is not the Members of Parliament. The escalation of prices is because of the failure of the Government, is because of the failure of administration, is because of the failure of the policies and programmes of the Government and to quote that as the reason for hiking of tariff, to my mind, is most unjustifiable and most misconceived. It has been made out by my friends here already that these public utility services, telecommunications and postal, are

£Shri M. S. Gurupadaswamy]

by and large mismanaged. Inefficiency is running very high in these departments. For paucity of time, I do not want to go into the whole thing. Mr. Arjun "Singh will agree with me; perhaps, if he had not been a Minister, he would have agreed...

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: I will agree with the right things even now.

SHRI M. S, GURUPADASWAMY:... that it is the most inefficiently run service. You cannot call it public utility service; it has become a disutility service for the common people.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: If he does not agree, he can consult Mr. Sethi.

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY: The Minister has said that he has not covered the full rise in the wholesale price index. It is a very small solace. But he is, by these measures, trying to mop up nearly Rs. 375 crores in telecommunication department and Rs. 79 crores in the postal department. Even then, there is a shortfall; there is a deficit, as my friend put it. There is not even a single sentence in the whole statement regarding economy, regarding efficiency. When a Minister brings forth such a hike in the tariff, it is normally expected of him to justify this and to give rational grounds for such a hike. I think inefficiency ratio is so high in this department that it has become a byword for inefficiency, particularly, the telephones.

I expected him to take all steps and measures to streamline this department, to cut down the expenditure. I am sure if he can streamline and rationalise the functioning of the department, this amount of Rs. 450 crores can be saved there. This burden is not necessary. He has taken pains to tell us that the new burdens are not a strains on the common man. I think this is a falacious argument. A burden anywhere in the present context is a burden everywhere. If you impose a burden on me, I will pass On the burden to my family and the burden on my\ family will pass on to other families. This can lead to a very in-fructuous consequence which you cannot prevent. Therefore, this argument is very falacious. Any bike either in tariff or price will affect the economy as a whole. From this point of view I say if you impose this burden, the services will become very costly, very expensive, even for the middle-classes. And it looks as if—I have* to say— each department is competent'—every other department in the Centre is competent— to raise its resources through taxes, through tariffs. Where is the end? Even this will not be adequate, according to my friends. He has to bring in more tariff hike in the budgeting time. I depreciate this kind of piecemeal budgeting. I condemn the approach of the Government to raise tariffs, to raise taxes and resources by instalment's and thereby add "to the total' burden on the people. Madam. I would like him to think coolly. This is his first major statement after he assumed office now as a Minister. He should not have come with this kind of thing soon after becoming Minister I do> not want to attack him unneces> sarily, but...

AN HON'BLE MEMBER: Can you?,

SHRI M. S. GURUPADASWAMY You do not have the patience to heav me fully. I said 'unnecessarily' Therefore, Madam, I would like thi hon. Minister to reconsider the propo sal. I appeal to him in the name 0 the people, in the name of the tax payers, to withdraw this increase ii tariff and consider it at the time o the Budget.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA alia V. ARU NACHALAM (Tamil Nadu): Madan Deputy Chairman, we are unhapp over this increase in postal and tele communication rates.

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAV] YA; At least on one point? *(Interrup tions)*

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Mr. Aruna is really unhappy, but he is bound by the whip of the party.

SHRI ALADI ARUNA alias V. ARUNACHALAM: There is no difference of opinion that it will seriously affect the common man. I understand the difficulties of the hon. Minister because he has to face a deficit to the extent of Rs. 230 crores. The Planning Commission has not sanctioned the required amount, what 'was asked for by the Ministry.

Now, what we should do to overcome the difficulties is, firstly, we should improve the efficiency of the department. For instance, in the case of the Overseas Communication Service, because of improvement i_n efficiency, we have been able to increase our income. In the year 1984-85, it was only Rs. 98. 71 crores. Now it has increased o'Rs. 109. 35 crores because of t'ne steps taken. The same kind of enthusiasm should be shown "n other areas also. We have many undertakings under this Ministry. Their installed capacity should be fully utilised, so that we can overcome these difficulties.

Madam, as Shr; Vajpayee h'as said, we are not able to contact on telephone from city to city. Our hon. Minister has claimed some credit by saying that he ha 1 not increased the local call charges from public telephones. We know very well that we 'are not able to speak at all from ublic telephones. We are also not able to make longdistance calls from public telephones in the rural areas. Therefore, there is nothing to claim credit over this concession.

If you g_0 into the increase in the details, we see that commission on pos tal orders have been increased. This will seriously 'affect mostly the unem ployed graduates. They are the peo ple who usually send postal orders when they aPply for jobs in Govern ment and other institutions. The wealthy and rich peole do not send postal orders. I would request that this should be withdrawn. In other areas, if at all any increase is necessary, it should be reasonable. For example, in the case of charges for shifting of telephone from one area to another, you have increased it by 150 per cent. Are you going to spend such amount on the shifting of telephones? I am not against any increase, as such, but it should be reasonable. But -we find that the increase in charges is as much as 100, 150, 200 per cent in the case of eight items. That is why we oppose this type of increase. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to withdraw the increase in tariff in the case of those items which seriously affect the poor people.

Take, for example, the money order commission. He says that up to Rs. 50, there is no increase. But nowadays, Madam, common people send money orders for more than Rs. 100 to their relatives and friends. Even the present rate is abnormal. You are more than penalising the people. You are charging 3 per cent. It is a penalty on the common people. When the present rate itself isi abnormal, it is not fair on the part of the Government to increase it further. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to consider the matter and withdraw the tariff at least in the cash of those items which affect the common peonle,

{Interruptions)

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Madam Deputy Chairman,... *{Interruptions).* Madam, now I will seek your indulgence as the Government is not going to do it.

Madam, I must congratulate the Minister because by giving such a statement he has tried to give us a glimpse of the 21st century. Of course, as it behaves them, the Government has tried to sugarcoat the bitter pill by saying that 275 free calls would be available within the rental. His approach, I am sorry to say, reminds

[Shri Nirmal Chatterjee]

hie of the recent instructions from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, they have advised that all public utility services should become a paying proposition. This has already reached U. P. as Mr. Sukul informed us just a few minutes back that they want to make medical services also a productive enterprise.

You have mentioned that this is a community service. No doubt, telephone are used by rich people, but now you have tried to create a condition whereby they can be utilized only by richer people, it could have been a wonderful service, had the rates been lowered, had the connections and the services reached every corner of the country and the homes of the poorer people also. Instead of that, in your attempt to enter the 21st century quickly, you are trying to increase the rates and thereby you are trying to deny this service to more and more people of this country, which could be of immense use to the population at large. You have found out a simple solution. There is a wait-list of 10 lakhs. The answer could have been to provide service to those 10 lakhs and then earn profit. The variable cost is lower than the price and you could have made up some of your deficits on the basis of supplying connections to these ten lakh wait-listed people. Instead of that, you have chosen exactly the reverse part. As they say, you have increasingly started depending on the market philosophy, which says, charge as much as they can bear. So you want to cut down the waiting list not by supplying connections but by increasing the installation charges from Rs. 300 to Rs. 800. This is your approach of being increasingly determined by the market philosophy. Your approach is not in terms of providing service to the society, in terms of welfare or utility service. And the impossible thing that seems to be, he says that in exchange of the hike in the rates of Installation, those who have already go* the telephones would get 275 free calls in place of 200. I don't have time, therefore, I will refer to just one or two other aspects. That aspect is that the working class is struggling and "earning. They are able to raise the wages. And now by a flanking movement, you take away that rise in wages. In a very parochial sense, Bengalis could be happy with your increase in money order fees. A majority of the working force in Calcutta comes from outside the State. We were with them, struggling for rise in wages. If it is 700 per cent rise since 1960-61, how much more should they pay in terms of money order fees? have you taken that into consideration? The rate should be lowered in fact because yesterday's 20 rupees is today's 2 rupees only. If this is the argument, the money order rate should have been decreased instead of being increased. Is this not true also for postal orders? Tomorrow the unemployed would be asked to pay Rs. 20 in postal orders and they will have to bleed a little more in order to satisfied your fruitless endeavours.

I am glad you have been able to lift the veil off the 21st century. But in the meantime are you not ashamed when you do this? Shri Vajpayee has referred to this. Only a few days back the railway freight was hiked on the basis of all kinds of arguments. Today you are doing this. And you will tell us that it is a part of socialism because it is telephone. Socialism is a very elastic term. In fact what you ar_e trying t_0 do is that increasingly you are on the one hand creating unemployment and on the other hand when the unemployed fight, struggle and achieve some gains, you try, through these flanking movements, to take away these things. You believe that thereby your deficit would be reduced. If you can improve your efficiency, if every call That is made goes through, will it not give you more income? But you have given up the path of construction because you have brought the entire economy into a situation when you can conceive of nothing. else but imposing more immi-

serisation on the people and trying to serve as much as possible, to the rich, reducing even that freeze. Would you answer these questions?, This is what I am asking of him. l

SHRIB. SATYANARAYAN HEDDY: (Andhra Pradesh): The Statement given by the Minister is most disappointing. The proposal to increase the tariff rates both for postal and telecommunication is a crime against the common man of this country. The common man is even not in a position to lead a decent life, even an ordinary life. He has no means of livelihood In such circumstances, the proposal is most disappointing. It is a loot. It is a crime against the common man of this country. If you go through the proposals, he has increased the registration fee and other postal charges. Most of the people from rural India have been coming to the cities. Unemployment is there. The agricultural labourers, the poor peasants, the marginal farmers have no. means of livelihood. They are not having remunerative prices. They are leaving their land and coming to cities in search of employment. They get employment here and they send money by money orders, by postal orders and by differ-, ent other means to their aged parents. -*, So in such circumstances you are increasing the rates. The registration fees has been increased from Rs. 2. 75 to Rs. 4. 50. You have raised it by more than 50 per cent. Similarly for other items the tariff has been raised. This should not have been done because the present situation does not demand that you put more burden on the common man. So I suggest that you should call a meeting of the representatives of all the political parties both from this House and the Lok Sabha and have a full, and thorough, discussion and come to a conclusion and have these proposals can be considered in the budget. Every time you are coming out by piecemeal to put more burden on the common man. Ultimately when you present the budget, you say that you have given so much relief to the common man. As a matter of fact, you are deceiving the country, you are deceiving the common man and you are putting the common man in such a situation that he is becoming more and more helpless. So, you are exploiting the situation. Therefore, I request the Minister kindly to take back these proposals. If you don't want to take Back these proposals, I have an inclination to tear these proposals to piece because these proposals do not deserve to be considered even by a man who has some means of livelihood. Because these proposals are not acceptable, we are strongly opposing them and/l request the Minister to drop them.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Madam Deputy Chairperson, it seems Mr. Arjun Singh started bowling by throwing a no-ball. I call this decision of the Government totally immoral because Government has no right to increase the cost of communications when the system of communications does not communicate.

The Minister should know that people, having lost faith in the system that the Government runs, are taking recourse to private mail and, therefore, private mailing has now become predominant in the whole communication system of the country because of a thoroughly worthless and incompetent department of the Government of India. In such a situation, this decision is totally immoral. Secondly, Madam, when the country is facing a situation almost of double digit inflation—galloping inflation'—such an administered price i rise is bound to have a snowballing effect. I should remind the Minister that the Reserve Bank of India, in a recent communication, has stated that the successive administered price rises announced by the Government account for 35 per cent of the general price rise that the country is faced with. Therefore, this decision of the Government, however small and marginal as is sought to be made out by the Minister, is bound to affect the common man—not the man with money but the common man—because

[Shri Gurudas Das Gupta]

he is hitting the money order. Therefore, Madam, I consider this to be an anti-people move. Thirdly, Madam, it is not because of the generosity of the Minister that the increase has not been so massive. It is because we had raised the matter in Parliament and the news had leaked out. Therefore, there were protests from all corners and this pre-emptive protest from all corners of the country has forced the Government to reduce the increase as it is being done. Even then the increase is immoral, the increase is inflationary, the increase, in my opinion, is a premium on inefficiency and corruption in a worthless department of the Government.

SHRI P. N. SUKUL (Uttar Pradesh): Madam Deputy Chairman...

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE; Are you going to support?

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: I entirely appreciate the need for the proposed hike in tariff and postal charges, etc. As the Minister has said, it is on account of the proposed expansion and upgradation of the telecom system and, of course, the need for payment of higher wages to the workers in the department that they want more funds and, naturally, if they have to generate it internally....

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH (West Bengal): How much are they going to give to the workers?

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: You listen first. I appreciate the need for all this. However, it is a fact that it is going to have an adverse impact so far as pooper sections of the society are concerned. Now, much has been said already. I will only suggest that, since you are increasing the tariff for local calls from 40 paise to 60 paise up *to* 2, 000 calls—which means *it* is a 50 per cent increase in the cost of a call—there should be at least a 50 per cent increase in the number of free call$_s$ also. So, the number of fred calls should in fact be 300 instead of 275.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:. What a little mercy.

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: Also you are-going to increase....

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Is there a pre-arranged understanding? *(Interruptions)*

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: It is only on the Opposition side that things are pre-arranged. On this side nothing is-pre-arranged.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Is it a pre-arranged position of the Member?

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: Not a prearranged position.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: You need not answer the interruptions.

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: There should be 50 per cent increase in the number of free calls also, and they should be 300 instead of 275 as proposed in the statement.

Also I will suggest, if possible, as regards your proposal to increase the _ rates from 15 per cent to 30 per cent in the case of book packets, packets having printed books, when the students are involved, when libraries are involved, when others are involved, it should be brought down by 5 per cent. You kept it at 25 paise instead of 30 paisa. It is tax on knowledge, and students may come from poorer sections also.

As regards money-order charges, there is going to be no change up to Rs. 50. But I will suggest that up to 500 there should be no change. You see, people working in Bombay, Calcutta and elsewhere, do not send Rs. 50, but up to Rs. 500 because of the increase in the prices of essential commodities and in wages also. So,.

up to Rs. 500 you do not increase the charges, and beyond Rs. 500 you increase the charges.

I will only request the Minister kindly to reconsider these charges which I have just mentioned.

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय : रजिस्ट्रेशन चार्जेज के लिये भी तो सुझाव दीजिए। बेकार नौजवान भी नौकरी के लिए दरख्वास्त देते हैं ।

श्री पशुपति नाथ सुकुल : आप ने जब नहीं दिया तो हम क्या करें ।

श्री सत्य प्रकाश मालवीय : हमने दिया है । दिया है ।

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Madam Deputy Chairman, a lot has been said.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: You say whether you are going to withdraw or not.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Are you going to withdraw or not?

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: I am not withdrawing. Let me say what I have to say.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: No. What do you want to clarify? *(Interruptions)*

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please sit down. Please listen to the reply. Please do not try to create a problem.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Are you going to withdraw or not? A simple answer we want.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: You have have asked for clarifications and answers.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Either you withdraw the proposed hike or we will withdraw.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yo first listen to what he has to sa:

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: That is th crux of the matter, whether he is gc ing to withdraw it or not. *(Interrup tions)*

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Pleas sit down when the Chair is on legs.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Madarr we want to" know whether he is goini to withdraw the statement or not.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Pleas< sit down.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Madan Deputy Chairman, I hope the House, will look at the point from a certait rationale.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA National perspective.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: I am asking you the rationale...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Ii it not international, but only national'

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Th rationale I am alluding to is that yoi have utilised your right as Member: of this House....

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: A Minister you are misusing your right

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: We canno allow you to fleece the commor people.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: You canno stop me from replying to what you have said. That is my right.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Do you hav< the right to fleece the people?

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: do you have the right to fleece the com mon people?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: But the point is, if you never wanted to heai the answer.....

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: There is no answer at all.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: You listen to me, what I have to say. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Does the system work? Shall I repeat what I said?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: This is not the way. *(Interruptions)* You never wanted to hear an answer. There was no point in asking the queries. If you have asked queries, then you have to listen to the answer. You are not allowing the Minister to speak. To ask a question and not to hear its answer is not a good Parliamentary practice. Please listen to him.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Our only query was that all this proposed increase in rates should be withdrawn. Would he agree to that? What is his answer to this query that we have made?

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Many other Members have raised many other issues. Let him first clarify. Then it is for you to take whatever stand you want to take. *(Interruptions)* It is not fair. You should first listen to him. *(Interruptions)* Please listen to him.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Hon. Members have very naturally referred to the inefficiency of the Department and the lack of satisfaction, -which, they *say is* widespread.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: There is a total dissatisfaction.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: The hon. Member, Mr. Gurupadaswamy asked me whether I would agree to it or not. In this connection I would like to say that there is a lot of improvement needed. Lot of efforts are needed. I can assume you that with cooperation from all sides of this House, it is possible to do so.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: You will do it in a century.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Improvement at whose cost? Will it not be at the cost of the unemployed people? You are imposing an extra commission *on* postal orders.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: How can I cooperate? I cannot cooperate by becoming a party to the increase that you have proposed.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: The only way by which we can cooperat$_e$ is that we need not book a call at all. In that manner we can cooperate.

SHRI P. N. SUKUL: It is all premeditated.

श्री अर्जुन सिंह : आदरणीय वाजपेयी जी के कोप भाजन बनने का सौभाग्य मुझे है। यह बात अलग है कि शायद यह सुयोग नहीं आता अगर मेरे पूर्व रेल राज्य मंत्री होते तो शायद इतना गुस्सा मेरे ऊपर नहीं होता। लेकिन मैं उनसे प्रार्थना करना चाहता हूं कि जरा संपूर्ण परिस्थिति को देखने की कोशिश करें। अगर आप समूचे आर्थिक ढांचे के ऊपर टैरिफ के आधार र चर्चा करना चाहते हैं, तो मैं समझता हूं कि शायद यह न्यायोचित नहीं होगा। आज जिस परिस्थिति में देश है उसमें बहुत सी बातें हैं जिनके बारे में एतराज हो सकता है, जिनके बारे में कुछ दृष्टिकोण हो सकते हैं, सिद्धांत हो सकते हैं। मैं उनसे इंकार नहीं कर सकता। लेकिन सवाल यह है कि यदि आप टेलीफोन, कम्यूनिकेशन और पोस्टल सर्विसेज के बारे में सोचें तो आपको यह स्वीकार करना पड़ेगा कि हम आज ऐसी स्थिति में हैं जहां एक ओर महंगाई है बढ़ती हुई और दूसरी ओर मांग है अच्छी सर्विसेज की, एफिशियेंट सर्विसेज की, उसके फैलाव की। तीसरी ओर जो कमियां हैं, उन चीजों को उपलब्ध कराने

की उनमें भी बढ़ोत्तरी है और यदि हम किसी ब्रक ईवन प्वाइंट पर पहुंचना चाहते हैं तो हमें कुछ विशेष प्रयास करने होंगे जो कि बहुत आवश्यक हैं ।

श्री दीपेन घोष : पोस्टल आर्डर पर कमीशन बढ़ाने से ? ...(व्यवधान)

श्री अर्जुन सिंह : आपने तो पोस्टल आर्डर को ले लिया । ...

श्री दीपेन घोष : आपने पोस्टल आर्डर को क्या छोड़ दिया? ...(व्यवधान)

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: It is a burden on the unemployed graduates.

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: In this hypocrisy is unlimited.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: Th$_e$ point is that we have to make that effort. It is in that direction of making that effort, that these tariffs have been revised. I would like to assure the House that at every stage we will make that effort to maximise efficiency and reliability, which together can only cater to the needs of the...

SHRI "DIPEN GHOSH: You must tell us who will bear the cost?

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: It will lead to total inefficiency.

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: I would like to know why at this point of time you have proposed this increase?

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: The point is that resources that are needed will have to be taken care of. if we want to proceed more quickly and go to what everyone desires, maximum utilisation and efficiency... *{Interruptions)*

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Are you going to revise and withdraw?

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: I will do that also but it has not been found possible... *(Interruptions)...*

SHRI DIPEN GHOSH: Are you going to withdraw the money order commission which you have raised, or not? *(Interruptions)*

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please sit down.

SHRI ARJUN SINGH: If it had been possible *to* do all this without bringing this tariff to this House, I would have been the first to do it. The realities have to be faced and having done this we shall make every effort to see that the services are improved, maximum utilisation is made and efficiency is improved which ultimately alongwith this will come to a situation where we will be able to carry out out... *(Interruptions)...*

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Madam, we cannot associate ourselves with this. Therefore, as a protest, we walk out. *[At this stage some hon'ble Members left the Chamber']*.

THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Now, the House stands adjourned for lunch to meet again at 2-30 p. m.

The House then adjourned for lunch at fifty-six minutes past one of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at thirty-four minutes past two of the clock, The Deputy Chairman in the Chair.

ANNOUNCEMENT RE. GOYERN-! MENT BUSINESS DURING THE WEEK COMMENCING THE 1ST DECEMBER, 1986"

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. M. JACOB) Madam Deputy Chairman, with youi permission, I rise to announce tha Government Business in this Hous< during the week commencing 1st De cember, 1986, Will consist of:

(1) Consideration and passing/re turn of the following Bills, as pass ed by Lok Sabha: